New Game Plus!

~The Struggles of a Popular VRMMO Livestreamer~

- Volume 3 -

Let's Make a Clan!

Author:

Murakami Mondo

Artist:

Kureta

[Translated by: Burei Dan Works]

Chapter 19
A New Way to Have Fun

The calming sound of a small brook brushed against the ear, The trees rustling in the wind.

As sunlight shone past the leaves and blotched the grassy field, a soft wind blew and brushed against the man's hair.

He was holding on to the hilt of the katana that hung from his waist.

Focusing his weight on the balls of his feet, his heel spread out horizontally.

Lowering his body, he stirred into action.

The man turned the mouth of his saya, and in the moment the katana was drawn, a dazzling light came forth, and the man's figure had vanished.

Flowers began to dance, a number of lights dashed across the grassy land.

To the Right, To the Left.

Every time the man disappeared, the flowers drifted and fluttered into the air. As if being freed from the constraints of gravity, they continued to drift about in the sky.

「…… *Fumu*」

After that light had run about several times, the man returned to the spot where he began── As if he had firmly grasped that sensation, Edgar returned the katana to it's saya.

「If I include an attack skill then I can activate it 4 time…… If I don't include it then 5 times is the limit huh. The next time I level up should I put stats into DEX[1], or should I put them into Stamina, it's a tough choice」

What Edgar wanted to confirm, was the drawback which he noticed during his PvP with the Samurai Hunter a few days ago. He wanted to better understand the Stamina consumption from using the Moon Step several times in succession.

If I were to raise my DEX, then not only will the accuracy of my attacks increase, but my movements will become quicker and sharper.

In terms of the usage of Moon Step, DEX is an extremely important stat.

However, if I don't have any Stamina, I won't be able to use Moon Step in rapid succession. Just like with the Lizardmen from a few days ago, if I were to go up against a large number of Mobs then I also have to consider the fact that my Stamina might be depleted in just a few moments.

「……Since I can supplement my DEX with equipment, I guess I should focus on Stamina for now」

Muttering this to himself, Edgar picked up a twig that had fallen by his feet, and he threw it into the air.

Drawing an arc in the sky, the small branch spun as it descended back to the earth.

Edgar immediately extended his hand and reached for the hilt of his katana. With his index finger and thump pressed hard against the crossguard, It cut loose from the saya.

In an instant.

Light ran forth.

The disappearing blade sliced forth as if it was a mirage, and it once again returned to the saya.

The fastest strike, The 【Iai】Tree's 【Razor Blaze】, the branch was assaulted by it again and again.

A single branch became 2 branches, and then 3, and 4.

「*Fumu*」

Finally it fell down to the ground, in Edgar's hands were 9 fragments of a former branch.

A feat which required an astounding level of precision and timing.

Although some of the cuts revealed a margin of error due to his low DEX status, Edgar had displayed an overwhelming level of technique.

However, the expression Edgar wore was not one of satisfaction.

So this is Edgar's limit huh, if it was Aran then he could have cut it into 16 pieces at most.[2]

As I thought, there is a major need to supplement my DEX.

Around this level wasn't there a belt or something that could increase my DEX……

「A-Amazing……」

「Hm?」

The pleasant sound of a voice brushed against his ear.

Watching the spectacle from within the shade of a tree was the figure of a person.

A Cleric clad in a white robe; Her name is Suzu.

As if watching a brilliant dance, Suzu let out those words as she watched Edgar transform the branch into tiny fragments within the blink of an eye.

「…… Oh, Suzu-san」

「P-Please excuse me, I didn't mean to spy on you」

「No, it's fine…… I don't really mind」

Being a bit embarrassed that he was seen diligently practicing, Edgar scratched the tip of his nose as he made a somewhat awkward and forced smile.

This beautiful grassy plain was not within a 'Field' in Dragon's Krone.

It was an area you could access through your Home House, a so-called「Training Grounds」.

This Training Ground was an Area that resembled your Home House, and although no Players can enter it unless you give them access, you could use Skills and Magic which normally can not be activated in a Home House.

「Edgar-kun, That thing from before…… Was that the Moon Step?」

「Yeah. Earlier when I fought against the Samurai Hunter I ended up running out of Stamina, so I just wanted to check out a couple of things」

There were a variety of functions in this Training Area.

For the purposes of practicing combination moves you could set your Stamina to infinite, and you can create a 「Doll」 or so-called copy of yourself to practice fighting against. If you allocate Skills for the doll to use, then you could even practice some PvP with this function.

Many players spend several long hours here in this Area, making full use of the Training Ground's functions. When he is playing as Edgar and Aran, Ran would spend expended periods of time caged up in this training place; perhaps for even longer than he spent going out hunting.

「Wow, so the Moon Step also its weak points」

「There is no technique in this world that doesn't have its weaknesses. If there was one then the admins would patch it after all」

「I see. I suppose that makes sense」

Although Moon Step is a technique that utilizes several Skills, unlike the Combination attacks that use skills from the same skill tree, the mechanic of「Stamina Reduction for successive activations」 did not apply. The Moon Step burns off Stamina like no tomorrow.

That was one of the few weaknesses of the perfect offensive and defensive technique: Moon Step.

「……Are you not interested about the Moon Step, Suzu-san?」

「Eh?」

「I mean, 'How do you use it?', or something like that」

That was something that somewhat perplexed Edgar.

Andou and Yamabuki, and also Megu, although those kind of questions haven't been asked recently, and there hasn't been much opportunity to bring it up like they are right now, but when they first started playing together those type of questions were endlessly thrown Edgar's way.

However, whenever Suzu was with Edgar she had never once asked about that subject.

「Hmm~, I don't know about Megu and the others, but I'm not that great at those kind of complicated things…… Also I'm not a Samurai so there's no need to know it, right?」

「*Fumu*」

「Oh, but there are a few things I'm curious about, you know? Like, since you are one of Aran's acquaintances, umm-…… What kind of person is Aran-san? stuff like that」

「Eh? That's what you want to ask?」

An unexpected question that came from Suzu's mouth.

Is Suzu-san a bit interested in Aran as well? She never behaved like she was interested in the past, so I thought she was indifferent about him.

「But, it's fine. I'm having lots of fun playing Dragon's Krone with Edgar-kun after all」

「……Eh?」

Continuing on, the words that came from her mouth caused Edgar to instinctively do a double take as he looked at Suzu.

Fun? Playing with ME is?

It can't be.

「Uhmm, by that, what do you mean?」

「……? Ah」

After thinking a while, Suzu finally realized the meaning behind the words she had just said.

As if it had been set ablaze, a bright red color quickly rose up and flushed her entire face.

「I, I didn't mean it like that! What I meant to say was, Playing with Ran-kun or Megu or Andou-kun, I meant that it's fun when we all play together, okay!?」

「…… What about Yamabuki?」

「Y-, Yamabuki-kun too」

“Of course him too,” Suzu replied in a panic.

The out-of-place playboy, Yamabuki. I shouldn’t be one to talk, but I pity the guy.

No, who cares about Yamabuki.

More importantly, I was dangerously close to getting the wrong idea about the meaning behind Suzu-san’s words just now.

If there’s one thing I’ve learned so far, it is that Suzu-san doesn’t hate having to talk to me, or doesn’t seem that way.

At the very least it isn’t「In order to participate in the Grand Mission, I’ll put up with having to deal with the gross Edogawa-kun」, and it wasn’t 「I, I always wanted to talk with Edogawa-kun」 either. It was a very “Neutral” kind of feeling.[3]

Since I have no idea what she’s thinking, I end up misunderstanding things by accident.

Please spare me from that.

「…… I see. So that’s why, Suzu-san suggested we do that thing huh」

「Suggested? You mean at school? Yup, that’s right」

As he was remembering the past Edgar muttered those words, Suzu answered back with her cheeks still slightly flushed.

「Hey, how about we get going soon? If we don’t get the job done then-」 (Suzu)

「……I guess so」

Edgar scratched his cheek as if it was a bit bothersome, and he opened up the Menu so they could leave the Training Area.

Seeing Edgar that way Suzu also showed a look of worry, so Edgar flashed a smile for her to see.

What Suzu had suggested back at school──

It was… Honestly speaking it was a topic that Edgar was not very enthusiastic about.

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「……Eh? You want to make a clan?」 (Ran)

「Yeah. A Clan, that sort of thing…… Wouldn't that be like we're on a Team? That's why I want to make one with everyone」 (Suzu)

It was on a rainy afternoon, during lunch break as the cold rain continued to gently poured down.

As the usual members were gathered to discuss their afterschool Dragon's Krone activities, Suzu suddenly brought up that suggestion.

As Suzu had said, a Clan is somewhat of a 「Team」; it was a group of people gathered together with the same purpose in mind.

In Dragon's Krone, there was a Clan System implemented into it, so Players could freely create Clans as they wished.

「Suzu, that idea sounds awesome! Let's make a Clan! That way we'd all look like comrades, I'm getting excited just thinking 'bout it!」

Promptly voicing her approval was Megu.

「It sure would. Yamabuki and I only play with Megu and the gang anyways」 (Andou)

「Yea, I'm cool with it either way though?」 (Yamabuki)

「……」 (Ran)

Giving their endorsement, Andou and Yamabuki each in turn added to the tension

However, among them was one person; only Ran didn't show any interest.

A Clan in game terms was an 「Organization」 that you were 「Affiliated」 with.

Each Clan had a purpose, and if you belonged to such a Clan, then it shows your own approval of that Clan's objectives. It also acts as a declaration that you will contribute towards that purpose.

In the past, there has only been one time when Ran was part of Clan.

The purpose of the Clan was not for socializing. It was created in order to defeat the most powerful Mobs; A Clan founded on the principle that strength and ability ruled supreme.

This was before Aran had made a name for himself as a popular livestreamer, he entered the clan in order to polish his own techniques. One of the clan rules was that if you couldn't handle being around another clan member then you should withdraw from the clan immediately.

Once you enter a clan gain a responsibility, one that says you must follow the rules

For Ran who has a strong loner's spirit, that is something that he wants to avoid the most. Clans were a detestable existence.

「But 'cha know, there's one thing first, how do we make a clan anyways?」 (Megu)

「If I remember…… I think we need to clear some kind of quest first」 (Suzu)

「Hey Ed, do you know?」 (Megu)

「……ッ」(Ran)

Not wanting to be involved, Ran was trying his best to become one with the air.

If there was something they did not know then before consulting the Wiki they should ask the re-starting player who is Ran; the group had grown accustomed to this process.

「……If you clear a『Delivery Quest』, the so-called Clan Quest, then then you should be able to make one」

「Delivery Quest?」

“What’s that?” asked Megu.

「It’s a quest where you deliver specific items to the Hunter’s Guild. You can accept the quest anywhere that there is a Hunter’s Guild, and the rarity of the delivery items shouldn’t be that high either. If the work is split up, then you can finish the quest in a day」

「Wow! If so then it’s perfect for us. We won’t even have to travel far for it」

Clapping her hands together, Megu looked like she was in high spirits.

The Clan Quest is a so-called「Busywork Quest」. It primarily consisted of crafting goods, and the ingredients you had to gather for it were nothing but a hassle to obtain.

Busywork quests had no fun in them, and although the majority of players loathe doing them, right now their group seems to feel the opposite and welcome the challenge.

Recently the「Lunch Break Meeting」of Ran and the others had many things on the agenda. From ‘What may have sparked the Samurai Hunting’, to ‘How they are

suppose to have fun while waiting for the video uploaded by those colluding players to be deleted', those type of subjects.

Crescendo has continued to be their base of operations, but considering that Suzu and Megu were attacked at the「Rabasta Woodlands」that was a bit separated from Crescendo, they haven't been playing in areas too far just in case they need to take shelter in city.

Because of this their actions were restricted. Recently they have taken to enjoying the port city's specialties; they spend most of their playtime lazing around while 「Fishing」.

「Edogawa, what kind of goods will we have to deliver?」

「It changes every time. Most of the time it's something like weapons or armor. More or less as the Story goes, it is apparently like a form of payment for having the Guild approve the creation of a Hunters Team, something like that」

「I see. So in other words, we accept the quest at the Guild, and then gather the ingredients and craft the items huh. Sounds great」

Having finally found something to do other than fishing, Andou was getting excited.

If you are going to craft goods then you are going to need ingredients. Although they can't go too far from Crescendo, they will still be able to do some long-awaited Mob hunting.

「Then, should we all gather at the Hunter's Guild today?」

「Totally! I'm getting real pumped up about this now!」

In response to Suzu's suggestion, Yamabuki's eyes lit up with the same flare they possess when he comes across a girl that suits his fancy.

However, Ran was the only one who seemed indifferent; he continued to emit a melancholic aura.

Up until now Ran had held a principle to never participate in these type of organizations.

However, Ran was tormented by inner conflict.

Everyone seems so enthusiastic, so if I'm the only one to oppose then it would only ruin the mood. I guess I should help out. I'm a bit happy that I can be in the same clan as Suzu-san, but I can only hope and pray that things won't end up like the last clan I was in, huh.

But still-

「So it's come to this huh, 'a clan'…」

Letting out a sigh, Ran turned his gaze over to the window.

As if reflecting how he felt down inside, the thick clouds blocking out the sky continued to pour down heavy rain.

Footnotes:

1. TL note: The original word here is [俊敏性]/ “Shunbin-sei”, which means “Resourceful”, “Cunning”, “Swift Judgement”, etc.

I went with DEX since the only direct conversion I could find was “Speed” but I suppose it could be referring to something else like WIS or INT, or even just Speed. If anyone knows for sure/has a better suggestion then please feel free to let me know.

Just thought I’d point it out since the original text doesn’t directly say “DEX”.

2. TL note: So to point out some math, Edgar cut the branch into 9 pieces, meaning that he used Razor Blaze a total of 8 times. In comparison, Aran can cut it into 16 pieces for a total of 15 Razor Blazes, so about twice as many times.

3.

Side Note: Both of these lines “In order to participate in the Grand Mission, I’ll put up with having to deal with the gross Edogawa-kun” and “I, I always wanted to talk with Edogawa-kun” were thought up by Ran in chapter 3.

Chapter 20
Harassment

There were 2 reasons as to why Edgar was waiting in the Training Room with Suzu.

The first reason is the one he had told Suzu, Edgar wanted to confirm the limits of Moon Step to better decide where to allocate his stats in the future.

As for the other reason… It was to somehow get his jittery heart to calm down.

「Edgar-kun, it seems like Megu and the others have started hunting」

「…… Where at?」

「They're at the coastlands that are pretty close. Apparently they're aiming to get the ingredients dropped by『Crab Scissors』and『Lizardmen』first」

Crab Scissors were low-level crab type Mobs, and together with Lizardmen they were among the first Mob characters you encounter when you first start hunting.

Of course, it wasn't just Megu who went out to hunt those Mobs. The Fighter Andou and the Knight Yamabuki also went.

──In other words, right now Edgar and Suzu were alone together in Crescendo, just the two of them.

「Before the ingredients gathering team returns, we have to buy the Recipe and leftover ingredients, right?」

「Y-Yea… You're right」

Surveying the MAP of Crescendo, Suzu confirmed the plan.

But, Edgar could only give an absent-minded response.

When Edgar heard about the situation from Megu, it was right after he logged in.

And right after that, together with Andou and Yamabuki, she dashed off and immediately departed.

By the time Edgar had logged in, it was before Suzu had arrived. Megu and her group of 3 had already logged in and accepted the Clan Quest from the Hunter's Guild.

The designated goods for this clan quest were the items「Leather Mail」and「Bone Sword」, is what Megu told him.

Just like they discussed at school, the ingredients for both of these low-level equipments could easily be purchased from materials stores or they were dropped by the Mobs near Crescendo.

However, there was a slight problem.

The number of「Leather Mail」and「Bone Sword」, they needed to have 20 of each. This would require a rather large amount of ingredients.

Therefore, Megu came up with the idea to divide their members into 2 groups and split the work.

Along with Andou and Yamabuki, Megu will be part of the Mob hunting and ingredients gathering team.

And, the two people who logged in late, Edgar and Suzu, will be part of the Recipe and ingredients buying team──

「…… I'm sorry Edgar-kun, you wanted to be a part of the『Ingredients gathering team』 right?」

「Eh?」

Dazing off as he looked at the Map, Suzu timidly called out to Edgar.

「Well, Edgar-kun is a vanguard class after all, I'm sure you wanted to hunt Mobs since it's been so long, right?」

「No, it's fine. I'm the one at fault for logging in late after all. Also, I can't just leave Suzu-san alone and let you go by yourself」

Although the city is a safe area where PK is impossible, with the Samurai Hunters running rampant right now, there's not telling what might happen.

For instance, if the Samurai Hunters find Suzu-san then they could restlessly stalk her, and she might be subject to various forms of harassment.

And in regards to hunting Mobs, after Suzu-san and the others log out, I can hop on to Aran and do all the hunting I want, so my frustration is at zero.

Although, because of that my lack of sleep is at max.

「Thanks, Edgar-kun」

「…… Well first off, let's search for the Recipe before we look for ingredients to buy」

Being met with a straightforward smile, Edgar ended up turning his gaze downward.

As I thought, Suzu-san is much tougher opponent than any high-level player.

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What was necessary to make「Leather Mail」and「Bone Sword」were【Pelt Armor Creation Method Ⅰ】and【One-Hand Sword Creation Method Ⅰ】respectively. Both of which were part of the 「Beginner Craftsman's Item Production Line」.

Although the items requested of you for the Clan Quest change every time, most of the time they are easily produced items from the Beginner Craftsman Recipes.

“Why do we have to go through the trouble of crafting so many beginner equipment just to create a clan?”, there were many people who raised complaints about this, but this aspect of clan creation has never been changed throughout all the subsequent game updates.

With VRMMOs being a brand new genre, there were certainly those who focused entirely their attention on Mob hunting and PvP combat. However, there are also those drawn to the in-depth crafting system, and the admins kept this quest for those who spent the time developing their crafting level, for those who wanted to put their skills to practical use.

And in order to cater to those dissenters, and also to appease to those Players who find it bothersome to hunt low-level Mobs and craft goods every time they want to make a clan, you were allowed to sell both the items themselves and the ingredients required for them at the Auction House or your own Social Shop. This led to a large number of transactions conducted primarily by beginner Players and became an important source of income for them. In addition this gave rise to so-called 「Crafting Shops」 where Players would go through the trouble of searching for ingredients and then crafting the goods for you. Because of this, one could say that the administrators’ decision was the correct one.

「Heya Nii-chan, would ‘ja be making a clan? ? 」

「Eh?」

They were walking along the beach that separated Crescendo from the beautiful ocean.

As Edgar and Suzu were on their way to the Book Shop, the NPC storekeeper at the Book Shop called out to them.

「The fact that we are trying to make a clan, how can you tell?」 (Suzu)

「Well, it's cuz ya know~ Crafting is something ya do by yourself, right? Most of the guys who come by here are all like that. But, there's 2 of you here…… And yer also a boy and a girl, a nice lookin'『Couple』. So you ought to be making a clan, right?」

「……ッ!?」

"Going on a date and makin' a clan. Must be great huh," The Book Store owner wore a sly smile. Both Edgar and Suzu both felt an awkward shyness develop between the two.

「W-We are not a Couple or anything like that!」

「Woow, how pure and innocent. Making a clan so that the two of you can spend more time together, it really burns of youth. In the past me and my wife also-」

「Enough with the stories of your past, Can you just hurry up and give us the Recipe?」

As the shopkeeper continued to wear a grin, Edgar promptly cut him off as he was about lose himself in the past.

What do you mean "wife". Aren't you an NPC?

What the hell kind of programming were you given?

「You're really cold-hearted huh, Nii-chan. If you can't have an open mind then yer girlfriend will end up hating you, ya know?」

「I already said we're not like that」

「Yea yea, here'ya go. You needed 【Pelt Armor Creation Method Ⅰ】and【One-Hand Sword Creation Method Ⅰ】right. For the ingredients you can buy them at the auction or the material shops at the East of the city. Ya can also use the social shops in the plaza too」

「Thanks. Let's go, Suzu-san」

「O-Okay」

Wanting to get away from the shopkeeper who has no idea what he's talking about, Edgar snatched up the Recipes and left the store with Suzu as quickly as possible.

「N-Next is the materials shop, right?」 (Edgar)

「……」

As if ashamed, Suzu buried herself deep within her hood.

Perhaps she was feeling embarrassed, Edgar was having a hard time finding the right words to say.

Why does it end up like this. The way everyone acts.

Is it really that weird for Suzu and me to be alone together?

I can't deny it's abnormal though.

「……I wonder, are there many people like that?」

Still surrounded by an awkward mood, the two were walking down the coastline as they headed to the eastern district of the city.

Carried by the wind, together with the aroma of salt, the sound of Suzu's soft voice reached Edgar's ear.

「Eh?」

「What that shopkeeper-san was talking about before」

「…… Couples and Clans, you mean that?」

「Yeah」

While slightly hanging her head in shame, Suzu replied back.

Due to the nature of virtual reality games, it was much easier to role-play compared to traditional games. And in Dragon's Krone, there were a few stories of that.

Of course there were those who purposely misrepresented their gender, otherwise known as「Nekama[1]」, but since the method of communication in this world was by using your real「Voice」instead of word in a chat, those people would instantly be exposed. You could say that cases like this were rare in Dragon's Krone.

Consequently, just like the book shopkeeper had said, there were many players in Dragon's Krone who created Clans for purposes unlike those in traditional MMO games.

「It's true that there are stories like that. How should I say… Apparently there are players that use it as a pick-up line」

「……?? What do you mean by that?」

「Basically…… umm…… A male player would say to a female player『I want to make a Clan with you』or something like that」

「So you mean…… It's kind of like, a confession?」

「That's what I've heard」

Somewhat embarrassed, Edgar scratched the tip of his nose as he replied.

Although this is a completely ludicrous conversation that is entirely unrelated to me, apparently there really are female players who fall for that line.

In the past, I remember reading about it in a magazine that was doing a special feature on Dragon's Krone.

Like in one of those movies, if some handsome character gallantly came to my rescue, and if he said that line to me after single-handedly defeating all the monsters, then I might just say Okay; a bunch of female players voiced opinions like that.

The super heart pounding suspension bridge effect, having their hearts seized at such a critical moment, it was a rather interesting read.

「I see…… So that's what it was」 (Suzu)

「……?? Something the matter?」

Just then, Edgar noticed that Suzu's complexion looked as if several dark shades had fallen over it.

「The truth is, before we started playing with Edgar-kun, there was a really persistent person who kept on insisting『I want to make a clan with you』, he kept bothering me with it」

「…… Wha-, are you serious?」

As Suzu uttered those words, Edgar looked back in shock.

What the hell.

No one ever told me this. This is the first I've heard of it.

That said, I only started talking to Suzu-san just recently though.

「He was very persistent, so Megu got really mad and said『We'll never play with you ever again! Stay away from us!』. Megu said she would report him to the administrators for harassment, but I thought going that far would be a bit too much 」

「No, Suzu-san, something like that completely falls under acts of harassment. Also, since that guy was so persistent, you should've reported him to the admins immediately」

Acts of harassment were on the same level as colluding, they are both things that might cause Dragon's Krone to be shut down.

In this virtual world where you could create a beautiful avatar for yourself, there are a few people who ride on their high horses while venting their frustrations with the real world.

Hearing stories of those kind of people, it really pisses me off.

「But…… Isn't that like, him asking me to go out with him?」

「Go out with him? By going out you mean… that person, do you know him in real life?」

「Yeah. Well, rather than knowing him in real life, he goes to our school……」

And, just as Suzu was about to say that man's name-

「Hmmm? Is that Suzu-chan?」

Materials stores and Variety stores, a number of different shops lined the city plaza.

An unpleasant tone that could strike a nerve, a man's voice called out from behind Edgar and Suzu.

「Eh, You're kidding!? Why is h-……ッ!?」 (Suzu)

「Wow, it's been so long. Have you been doing well? Wait, if we bumped into each other in a place like this, doesn't that mean we're just destined for each other? Or perhaps, were you out looking for me?」

Seeing that man, the startled Suzu ducked down and tried to make herself seem small.

Short brown hair with a two-block hairstyle[2], dark tan skin.

Giving off a feeling of deja vu, a laid-back atmosphere enveloped the man with the class "Knight".

Seeing that player's name, Edgar suddenly realized.

「Suzu-san, that guy who you said tried to flirt with you…… Is that guy perhaps… This guy?」

「……Yes. But, why is he here……」

Grabbing the hem of Edgar's clothes, Suzu looked to Edgar with fear in her eyes.

I see, so this guy is the persistent bastard who's been harassing Suzu-san.

I also know this guy.

He looks the same way he does in the real world, so he did a real world scan of his body like I did huh.

This bastard…… This guy is, he is someone who doesn't lose to Yamabuki in terms of playboy-ness. He is Itou Yoshizumi from the class next door.

Footnotes:

1. TL note: As explained in the passage, a Nekama is someone who pretends to be the opposite sex than their real one when playing online.

2. TL note: From what I gather, a two-block cut is a (korean?) hairstyle where the sides and back of your hair are cut short, whole the hair on your crown is left medium to long.

Chapter 21
A Showdown Between Men

This Itou Yoshizumi…… He is a man by the name of「Yoshii[1]」here in Dragon's Krone. Being from the class next door, even the loner Edgar who tries to avoid other people knows about him. A rather famous male student renowned for being quite the「Carefree[2]」type of guy.

Good at Sports, A Smooth-talker, Life of the Party.

He belonged to the upper caste of the school's hierarchy, popular amongst both boys and girls.

Yoshii had everything Edgar did not; he was the complete opposite of Edgar.

「Every since then you've never talked to me. I was worried about it you know, Suzu-chan」

Making it seem like an overreaction, Yoshii raised his shoulders as he looked at Suzu with a wry smile.

What the hell's he mean by "Suzu-chan".

Don't get overly friendly.

「Ah, did you perhaps take that whole『Let's make a clan』thing seriously? Ha ha ha, that was just a joke, a joke. Suzu-chan is so cute so I just wanted to tease you a bit」

「For being just a joke, it sure doesn't seem that way to me though?」

「…… Hmm?」

As Yoshii let out a cheery laugh, Edgar stepped forward and obstructed his view.

It seems like he never noticed that Edgar was there in the first place, having a guy randomly show up beside Suzu and block his way, Yoshii wore a quizzical expression.

「Huh, and you are?」

「I am Suzu-san's friend」

「…… "Friend"?」

Hearing those words, Yoshii glanced over at Edgar and ran his gaze over him, as if sizing him up.

And Edgar did the same, he thoroughly scrutinized Yoshii's appearance.

If I were to guess from his level and equipment, I have a feeling that Yoshii started playing Dragon's Krone much earlier than Suzu-san and the others. It wouldn't be strange to see players on his level making their debut at the Metropolis City of Vernewt in the Veroon Grand Duchy Area.

In spite of that, he is here in the beginning town of Crescendo for some reason.

Is the reason why, because of Suzu-san?

「"Edgar-kun"?…… Never heard of ya~. You say you're Suzu-chan's friend, but does that mean friend in real life?」

「That's right」

「Are you classmates? I've never even seen you before」

Placing his hand on his chin, Yoshii dug through his memory.

Whether it be his own class, or the students in the classes around his, Yoshii pretty much knew everyone. But for some reason he couldn't recall seeing Edgar's face before.

Not remembering the loner student from the class next door, it was obviously he wouldn't know.

「Well, whatevs. And so, you have some business with me?」

「No, nothing in particular. However, I'm in a bit of a hurry to get a job done with Suzu-san you see. So…… We don't have the time to be messing around」

「…… Hmm, a job huh? Sounds interesting」

Perhaps he couldn't accept the thought of Suzu being together with some unknown man, a slight sign of annoyance showed in Yoshii's expression.

Sensing his change in attitude, Suzu tightly gripped Edgar's clothes as she stood paralyzed.

「Sorry but could you please back off? You're scaring Suzu-san」

「Huh, scaring her? What's the matter, Suzu-chan?」

Hearing that Yoshii looked over the Suzu who was hiding herself behind Edgar.

Is he acting like this on purpose, or is he just an airhead.

Either way, he's a really stubborn guy. From Suzu's standpoint, the situation hadn't escalated so far that they had to report it to the admins, but it's better the strongly tell him to step off.

Hearing Yoshii's verbal advances, Edgar was slowly getting more and more irritated.

But surprisingly, the first one to act was not Edgar, it was Suzu

「…… It's because Yoshii-kun keeps trying make advances on me like this」

「Eh?」

Gathering her resolve, her eyes peered out from the shadow of her hood, and Suzu boldly fired back at Yoshii.

A similar thing had happened before. Just like when she told off those colluding players from the Grand Mission several days ago, although she is normally quiet, Suzu will say what she has to when the time is right. This was an unexpected side of hers.

「I know that Yoshii-kun is from the class next door, and you're probably saying these things because we know each other, but……I'm sorry, to put it frankly, it is really annoying」

「What do you mean by "it"? You mean when I invited you to make a clan?」

「Yes. I won't make a clan with Yoshii-kun, and I never will」

「Hmm? Why is that?」

「It's because I'm going to make a clan with Edgar-kun」

「……W-What did you say!?」

The carefree expression on Yoshii's face dramatically changed, as if he had become a completely different person.

And, for some reason, Edgar's expression was also frozen stiff after hearing that.

Suzu-san, don't you think you should've worded that more carefully.

You meant to say, Edgar-kun「and the others」, right?

If you say it like that, I think Yoshii will likely get the wrong idea.

「……What is the meaning of this? Why is Suzu-chan going to make a clan with *this* guy?」

「You heard me, Yoshii-kun. It's exactly what you think it is」

「……W-Wait a sec, Suzu-san!?」

As Suzu firmly exclaimed such an inconceivable idea, the one who was thrown into discord was Edgar.

By "it's exactly what you think", what is that suppose to mean, Suzu-san?

You should tell ME of all people first.

「ha, haha, you ignored all my invitations…… And you're going to make a clan with this plain-looking guy?」

「That's exactly right」

「ッ!!」

As if he had taken a 「Critical Hit」, Yoshii was taken aback as his face looked towards the sky. Hearing Suzu's words caused his body to stagger, and he could only manage to keep a forced smile on his face.

At school he was outgoing and popular, for Yoshii who had a playboy attitude, those words brought an unthinkable amount of humiliation upon him.

Suzu-chan didn't choose me, but for who knows what reason she chose this mediocre, plain guy instead──

「…… Unbelievable…… Suzu-chan, There's no way I can accept this. Absolutely not!」

「Eeh?」

The easy-going air about him had disappeared, Yoshii was burning up with the fires of jealousy.

And the one to take the brunt of Yoshii's jealous flame, was of course Edgar.

「You there, Edgar-kun」

「W-What」

「How about we have a contest」

「…… What kind of contest?」

Together with a gaze as sharp as a knife, Yoshii fired off those words. In Edgar's mind an unpleasant hunch started to form.

「Of course, Me or You. We'll have a contest to decide which one of us is the man most fit for Suzu-chan」

Yeah… I knew it would come to this.

In response to Yoshii's all to anticipated reaction, Edgar's spirits came crashing down.

The optimal way to deal with these troublesome type of guys is to just「Not Participate」.

By using the fact that we are busy and an excuse, we can just leave and report him to the admins for harassment later. Letting the admins take care of this would be for the best, but──

「Hey wai-, Yoshii-kun, what do you mean by "the man most fit"!?」

「Suzu-chan, be quiet. Listen up Edgar-kun. I'm fine with fighting you in PvP, but our levels are too far apart. I don't have a hobby of bullying those weaker than me」

「Oh, is that so」

For me, I'm also okay with some PvP though.

I rather welcome the idea.

「And that is why, I have a proposal. A *Fair* contest」

「Stop acting noble and just spit it out already」

「……Hmph. You said that you were on your way to make a clan, right? That's what the contest will be. 2 hours from now. You have until midnight to establish your clan. If you can do it within the time-limit then you win. If you can't do it then it's My win. If you are victorious, then how about I obediently resign to you. But if I am victorious…… Then I'll have Suzu-chan join My clan instead」

「……ッ!?」

The hell? How is that even a contest.

Upon hearing Yoshii's proposal Edgar grew even more apathetic.

We've already accepted the Clan Quest, and we also now what items we have to make. We even bought the Recipes already.

No matter how you think about it, at most it would take us only 1 hour to clear the quest.

But, something seems fishy.

If he is challenging me to this kind of contest, then Yoshii must have some way of winning.

「The odds are in your favor, but maybe that's making you have cold feet?」

Although Yoshii wore a smug grin on his face, Edgar continued to calmly analyze the situation.

Yoshii probably thinks that I am without a doubt a beginner player.

Also, he probably thinks that it's only me and Suzu-san making a clan; that there is「only 2 of us」.

I see now──

It's true that if there's only 2 of us, then it wouldn't be strange to assume that it would be difficult for us to hunt Mobs and also clear the quest within the time-limit.

Yoshii looks like he's been playing Dragon's Krone for quite a while now, so he probably has a lot of money on him.

If he finds out the required items for the current Clan Quest, then he could go and buy out all the ingredients before we get the chance to. So he secretly plans to sabotage us like that huh.

「Edgar-kun」

Suzu apologetically whispered into Edgar's ear.

「…… I'm sorry. Because of me, you-」

「No, it's alright. However, I'll let Suzu-san be the one to decide whether we should accept this contest or not」

「Eh?」

「It's alright if we accept the contest, and I also think it's fine if we ignore it and leave. But you know, I'll say one thing, this might be a really good opportunity」

「Opportunity?」

Hearing Edgar's words, Suzu slightly tilted her head looking puzzled.

「Even if we ignore the challenge and report this to the admins, he still goes to the same school as us. Suzu-san, as long as he knows you in real life, it will be difficult to get Yoshii to give up on this matter. Taking that into consideration, if we accept the challenge he proposed himself and are able to clearly draw the line, then it's possible to change the current situation for the better」

This guy is the type who cares his own popularity and status.

If you consider that, then even though he always acts aloof and carefree, he won't go back on his word especially since he suggested it himself.

Because of he did go back on his word, it would cause his reputation at school to crumble.

「That's true, but……」

「I'll definitely win this contest. You don't have to worry about that」

「Edgar-kun……」

At Edgar's clear declaration, Suzu's chest welled up, and she felt an indescribable feeling of reassurance.

「Okay. Edgar-kun, Thank you」

「Yeah, just leave it to me」

Gently nodding her head, Edgar answered back with a smile.

If it is Edgar-kun then he will definitely come to my rescue.

Just like he did during the Grand Mission──

「Now then, what will you do? Edgar-kun, how about we have a showdown, fair-and-square」

「……Very well. That contest, I'll take you on」

Looking straight forward and meeting Yoshii's gaze, Edgar decisively fired back.

「Good. Okay then, you have 2 hours. If you can clear your Clan Quest before then, it's your win. If not, then it is my win」

「Fair enough」

Not even 2 hours, We'll finish this in less than one.

As Yoshii glared back with a sharp scowl, Edgar calmly nodded his head.

──However, so quiet that Edgar and Suzu did not notice, Yoshii smiled as he let out a small chuckle.

Footnotes:

1. TL note: Yoshizumi's in-game name is Yoshii spelled out in hiragana as 「よっしー」. As a side note, I'll add to his character's page in a bit.

2. TL note: I had quite the hard time trying to figure out the appropriate word to use here. The original word is 「お調子者」 which would can mean many things such as "a frivolous person", "someone who gets ahead of themselves/carried away", in some senses it could mean "extroverted", etc.

In the end I decided to go with "Carefree/nonchalant/laid-back" here and vary the different uses throughout the chapter.

Chapter 22
The Battle for Suzu (Part 1)

「Ehh, The hell! Did that 『Lan-terd』 come back!?」

Carried by the salty breeze, the sound of Megu's surprised voice echoed throughout the city of Crescendo.

「…… Umm, what is a 『Lan-terd』?」

「It's that Lanky-Bastard who looks like a sissy girl! That jerk, even though I told him to never come near us again」

「Ohh」

So that's what it means huh.

Watching Megu vexingly grind her molars together, Edgar nodded his head in understanding.

The ingredients gathering team consisting of Megu and Andou, and also Yamabuki, were hunting Mobs by the coastline without running into many problems.

Upon returning to Crescendo to replenishing their supplies, they had heard about the contest with Edgar and each were reacting to it in their own way.

「If this is how things are gonna be then we'd better put our backs into it, or else it could turn out bad. Let's resupply with items and get right back to hunting, Yamabuki, Megu-san」

「But 'cha know, that guy's got a real headstrong attitude, so don'cha think he'd do a bunch of stuff to sabotage us?」

Yamabuki brought up a point in reply to Andou's words.

Since he possessed the same playboy characteristic, Yamabuki felt that Yoshii from the class next door was somewhat of a rival of his. Because of that, Yamabuki was pretty familiar with Yoshii's behavior patterns.

「By sabotage…… Do you mean he might try to PK Megu and the others while they are Mob hunting?」

「Nah, I doubt that. That guy, he cares the most about what other people think of him, so he wouldn't do something to lower is image. 'Specially stuff that'll give him a bad rep, like PK」

As Suzu asked a question, Yamabuki gave yet another reply.

That was something that Edgar also understood from the his conversation with Yoshii earlier.

If Yoshii was planning on obstructing them, then he wouldn't do it by any direct means. No doubt he would use more roundabout methods.

「In that case…… Ya think he would go to the auction house and material stores, and buy out all the ingredients we can't get from hunting Crab Scissors and Lizardmen?」

「…… I also considered that, but I think that would be difficult」

Megu offered a hypothesis, but Edgar answered in reply.

「Would be difficult? But don't material stores have a daily limit to how much they sell? If they become sold out then won't we hafta wait until it resets at midnight?」

Megu was mainly worried about that point.

For stores operated by NPCs, material stores are the only ones with a daily sales limit imposed on them.

In other words, material stores are the only ones that can be「Sold-Out」of an item.

「Yeah. What you said is true, Megu-san. I think the reason why Yoshii made the time-limit before midnight was because of that reason」

「Right?」

「However, material stores aren't the only places that sell ingredients and quest items. They're also sold at the auction house, and you can even buy them at social shops. It's completely impossible to buy up everything because of that」

It could be said that the admins set a limit on the goods sold by material stores in order to help out beginner players. Because there was a demand for items that were sold-out at the material stores, it allowed beginner players a way to earn a small bit of income by selling them at auctions and social shops.

A Social Shop: it is a system that allows individuals to set up their own personalized「Street Stalls」.

Unlike using an auction house where you were required to do business while in a city, you could designate your Support NPC to manage your social shop and set up business just about anywhere.

In other words, even in small villages like Myune which did not have an auction house, or in the Field, or even in the deepest parts of a Dungeon, it was possible to sell goods to other players almost anywhere. Buying out all the necessary items and ingredients from those social shops was physically impossible.

「Is it not possible even if Yoshii-kun has a bunch of his friends go around buying everything?」

「It's still impossible, Suzu-san. Perhaps it would be possible if we're talking about rare and hard to obtain items, but the materials and equipment we need are things that even beginner players can get their hands on. Even if Yoshii had a bunch of people helping him, the magnitude of players selling what we need at the auction and social shops are just way too large」

Basically, it's a matter of supply and demand; the supply greatly surpasses the demand for those items.

If Yoshii held a lot of influence in this world, and if he managed to mobilize several hundreds of players together then it might be possible, but it would still require them to have to proper coordination and timing to purchase the goods right when they hit the market.

「…… Hmm~, I kinda get what Ed is saying here. That would mean, should we give up on hunting Mobs and just run around buying stuff instead?」

「No, I think it's better if we stay split into 2 groups. I think it's best if we have Edgar and Suzu-san stay as a group and look around the auction house and social shops」

"And if the two of you find any ingredients from Mob drops, then buy them up immediately.

Let's be on double-standby and hunt as many Mobs as we can and buy as much as possible," unexpectedly it was Andou who proposed this two-fold plan.

「…… Yeah, I agree with Andou-kun」 (Edgar)

「Ooh, yur thinkin' pretty smart today huh, Andou」 (Yamabuki)

「Shaddup dummy, I'm always calm and level-headed」 (Andou)

He he he, Andou scratched the tip of his noses in embarrassment.

However, looking at Andou from the side, was Megu's ice-cold gaze.

「…… Hmm～, who were the idiots who charged in head first during the Grand Mission again?」

「*Gulp*…… that was……」

「…… *Haa*? You say something? If you have something to say, then how 'bout you say it loud 'n clear for all of us to listen?」

Saying that, Megu grabbed the now mournful Andou and Yamabuki by the wrist, and said to Suzu and Edgar 「If anything happens then be sure to send a message」 before dragging them off.

It appears that she is still holding a deep grudge regarding that incident. A woman's willpower is a terrifying thing.

「How should I say…… Megu, she's like a queen-sama」 (Suzu)

「Well, it does kind of suit her… I think」

As if she was a queen being escorted by her manservants, the 2 of them obediently followed Megu, and they disappeared in the direction of the plaza.

Although they were reaping what they sowed, Edgar could not help but feel sympathy for Andou and Yamabuki who had their weakness tightly grasped by Megu. But, as Edgar watched the broken men depart, he dared not speak out.

◊ – ♦ – ◊

After separating from Megu and her group, Edgar and Suzu decided to head towards the material stores and the auction house.

They had already purchased the Recipes.

The ingredients needed to craft bone swords were「Crab Claws」and「Animal Hair」. Leather mails needed the ingredients「Lizard Skin」and「Leathere Straps」.

「Crab Claws」are dropped by Crab Scissors, and「Lizard Skin」is dropped by Lizardmen. In that case, our highest priority should be purchasing「Animal Hair」and「Leather Straps」.

Of course, if we come across some「Crab Claws」or「Lizard Skin」then we'll buy what we can.

「The required goods, we need 20 bone swords and 20 leather mails, right?」(Suzu)

「That's right. Those ingredients aren't very expensive, so it should be easy for us to get our hands on them」

In some genres of MMOs, there is the possibility that crafting items might fail, but Dragon's Krone had no such feature.

Instead of that, there were fluctuations in the weapon's stats. The functionality of the weapon will either increase or decrease depending on your skill level.

Since the crafted goods will be used for a quest, the weapon's stats don't matter at all.

Therefore we probably won't have to buy any extra ingredients.

「Welcome」

When Edgar opened the door he was greeted by the kind voice of the store owner.

The first place Edgar and Suzu headed for, was the materials store that was close to the plaza.

Though the store's interior wasn't that large, the shelves were lined with many different ingredients. These ingredients weren't necessarily the ones for sale; they were simply a collection of Objects.

「Excuse me, I would like Animal Hair and Leather Straps, 20 of each please」

When they discussed things with Megu and the others earlier, it was decided that Suzu would handle the money until the end of this quest. Fulfilling her duty as the team's accountant, Suzu began the exchange with the storekeeper.

Incidentally the drop items of「Crab Claws」and 「Lizard Skin」 were not sold in the materials store. The only place to buy them would be either the auction house or social shops.

「Animal Hair, and Leather Straps. Okay, please wait one moment」

The shopkeeper held up a list in his hand and scrutinized it.

That list contained all the available ingredients in alphabetical order; the shopkeeper slowly ran his finger down it as he searched.

However, after some time, his finger had arrived all the way at the bottom of the list.

「I am sorry. Both ingredients are currently sold out」

「…… As expected, huh」

Edgar's mumbling could be heard from the side.

Just like Megu-san anticipated, it looks like Yoshii has bought everything.

「Incidentally, do you remember who it was who bought it?」

「The person who bought Animal Hair and Leather Straps? Let's see… I wonder what kind of person they were……」

「Well how about, was he a lanky looking guy, someone who looks like he's just fooling around?」

Supplementing Edgar's initial question, Suzu promptly chimed in.

However, they were unable to get a direct response.

「Hmm～…… No, I am sorry. There are a lot of different people who come in after all. I can't seem to remember」

「Is that so……」

「Young lady, do you really need those ingredients that badly? In that case, I believe we should receive a restock in about an hour……」

As Suzu became discouraged the storekeeper quickly tried to follow up. Edgar looked towards the clock being displayed into the lower corner of his view.

30 minutes had already passed since we've accepted Yoshii's challenge.

We don't have the leeway to be wasting time here huh.

「No, it's fine. Let's go, Suzu-san」

「Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Shopkeeper」

「Sorry about that. Come by again next time」

Suzu left the materials store with a grave look on her face.

However, Edgar remained collected and did not panic.

「It will be alright, Suzu-san. It was within our expectations that Yoshii would buy out the store」

「…… Yes, you are right」

「If we head to the auction then we should be able to buy everything. You don't have to worry」

Animal Hair is dropped by Mobs that appear around the Rabasta Woodlands, and we can also make Leather Straps from the Lizard Skins.

It might be difficult for us since we can't venture too far, but「Crab Claws」 and「Lizard Skin」 are important sources of income for beginner players like ourselves.

There should be a ton of them on sale, there's no way they could possibly be sold out.

「…… Okay, but… let's hurry Edgar-kun. For some reason I have a bad feeling about this」

Suzu wasn't a complete novice who didn't know anything about Dragon's Krone.

Just like Edgar had predicted, she too know that the ingredients they needed were an essential source of income for the players who made Crescendo their home base. There should be plenty of ingredients on sale because of that.

And yet, Suzu was unable to ease this unknown feeling of dread.

「Yea, you're right. Let's hurry」

Edgar nodded in reply.

Together with Suzu who was restless with anxiety, Edgar picked up the pace and hustled towards the Auction House.

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